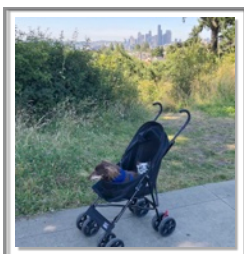




Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

It is mid-summer in Seattle, 78 degrees, blue sky with a few clouds. What a day for a daydream! My two dogs are getting old, Melanie is now 18 and Anna is 17. Carolyn and I have bought a stroller for them. We roll them up to the far end of Jefferson Park each afternoon, and then they are still able to walk back home, knowing dinner is waiting when they get there. It is important to enjoy each moment as best we can, working to do what needs



doing this day. The future is merely a fantasy, and in these trying times, it is more important than ever to live our Great Vow to care for one another. No one knows if there will be a tomorrow. We are here in this form for just an eye blink, our planet two eye blinks, the sun three eye blinks and so on. Everything is impermanent, even the universe. Life is but a dream and as we live this dream together, let's remember that only when idealization and vilification are absent does everything become clear and undisguised.

We had 27 participants attend Summer Sesshin the last week of June. Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez was our Dai Tenzo (chief cook) and George Kyoki Gibbs and other volunteer tenzos assisted her. The tenzos sacrifice a lot of time away from the zendo (meditation hall) to prepare delicious fare for us. I'm always so grateful for their dedication and service. Our Shika (host/manager) was Rev. Anne Sendo Howells. The Shika organizes our samu (work) assignments and along with the Fusu (temple accountant – Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei) makes sure everything is prepared and organized before sesshin



Summer Sesshin 2019

starts. Genki Takabayashi, our founding abbot often told us that samu was the most important part of our training because samu is the conduit that transitions our practice from the zendo to daily life. Once again Rev. Gendo Testa served as our Jikijitsu (timekeeper). The Jikijitsu not only times our sits, but also makes sure we stick to the schedule and that we stay quiet in the zendo. Not an easy job, when we all like to talk and move! However, we all know that the quieter and stiller we are, the deeper our zazen will be. Rev. Seifu Singh-Morales served as our Densu (chant leader) who kept the beat during our sutra recitation and also made sure the altars were well cared for. Eddie Daichi Salazar, assisted by Eric Seiku Dee and others, served as our Jisha (tea servers) and kept us all well-nurtured with tea, coffee and snacks. Sally Zenka Metcalf Sensei served as my Inji (abbot assistant) and took care of the dokusan (Dharma interview) room and managing the dokusan line. In addition, she oversaw garden samu every day. Rinzan Osho gave an inspiring the Dharma Talk on the second day; you can listen by following this link to [Kasho and a Flagpole \(No-Rank Zendo Podcast\)](#). All of my teishos given during Summer Sesshin on [The](#)

[Book of Equanimity](#) can be found on [Chobo-Ji's Zen Podcast](#) with the exception of the last teisho, which has been transcribed for this issue. On the last day of sesshin, longtime sangha member Elijah Zupancic did Jukai (Buddhist Name and Precept Ceremony), more on this later in this issue.

I'm sad to say that Rev. Kobutsu Malone was found deceased in his apartment in Sedgwick, Maine early in the evening on July 29. Kobutsu trained for a time at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji (DBZ) where I also trained for many years, and where currently Rev. Seiho Morris has returned to continue his training. Kobutsu's and my time at DBZ did not overlap, but he and I became friends after we both left DBZ because of Eido Shimano's shenanigans. Kobutsu worked tirelessly for the downtrodden and abused, and is well known for his extensive [prison work](#). He was



Continued on next page...

also a woodworker who made nearly every ring found in Chobo-Ji's rakus. Kobutsu was also a cantankerous chain smoker who loved guns and had some serious chips on his shoulders. He was instrumental in Eido Shimano's exposure and downfall through the publication and maintenance of the [Shimano Archive](#).

On August 4, I had the good fortune to be a special guest at the Dharma Lamp transmission ceremony for Kate Marchevskova (who has sat with us at Chobo-Ji), given by Eileen Kiera (Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh tradition) with assistance from Jack Duffy (Aiken Roshi tradition) at the [Mountain Lamp Community](#) in Deming, WA. I will soon be asking our Program Committee to invite Kate to give a talk at Chobo-Ji.



If you have not heard already, I am excited to announce that I too will be conducting a Dharma Transmission Ceremony (Shisho-Shiki) for Rinzan Pechovnik Osho on October 5th in Portland, which coincides with Bodhidharma Day and the start of my 40th year as an ordained follower of the way. In my formal commitment to propagate Zen training in the West, I have had four goals: train for a bit in Japan, complete the traditional Rinzaï koan curriculum, start a residential practice center, and cultivate at least one Dharma Heir. Of course there is always more to do than can be done in a single lifetime, but I feel deeply grateful to have gotten this far and I'm very much looking forward to the ceremony and celebration on October 5th.



It should be noted that actually nothing is transmitted in a Dharma Transmission Ceremony! We all have an inner sage and there is after all nothing to attain or grasp.

On the other hand, after years of training together the artificial barriers between student and teacher dissolve, and when this happens and our tradition's koan curriculum is completed, there comes a time to celebrate that we have always shared the same deep heart-mind. Rinzan and I feel this mutual recognition, and I trust his ability to model and deepen our form and training style for future generations. Of course, only time will tell. The term "Roshi" should not be used for at least ten years, and only after demonstrating an overall healthy pattern of growth as a mature follower of the way who is associated with a stable and flowering sangha.

Besides what has already been mentioned, you will find in this issue announcements for the upcoming Fall Intensive, Autumn Sesshin and Fall Post Assignments. In addition, you will find an article by Rev. Sendo on the letters between Zen Master Hakuin and one of his principal heirs, Torei Zenji, and an article by Rev. Seifu on applying the Eightfold Path to business endeavors. For anyone associated with Chobo-Ji who has not experienced the power of Nonviolent Communication as a Spiritual Practice of Right Speech, Marcia Christen is offering a two part workshop, Oct. 26 & Nov. 2. Please watch our weekly Temple Happenings bulletin for registration information. [Daichi](#) and perhaps others will do this year's annual [Buddhist Global Relief](#) Walk to Feed the Hungry. Please consider sponsoring someone you know.

I hope you enjoy these and the other offerings found here. May we all stay cool, openhearted and determined in the midst of the polarizing and trying circumstances in which we are living.

With gassho,

Genjo

Hakuin's Cloth Drum

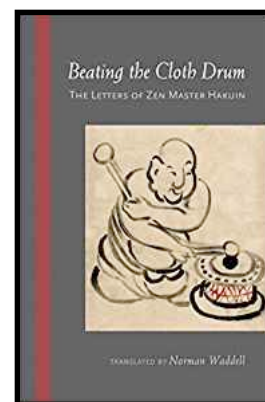
Review by Rev. Sendo Anne Howells

"My strong infatuation for streams and rocks is beyond any cure." This exuberant line appears at the end of a marvelous thank-you poem Hakuin Ekaku wrote for the physician Layman Ishii (Gentoku

Rojin). About 15 years older than Hakuin, Ishii was one of Hakuin's earliest students and also a friend and important patron. At his behest, two large boulders had been transported from Ishii's home village on the slopes of Mount Fuji to the garden of Shoin-Ji, Hakuin's temple on the coast about six miles away. This had been a major undertaking involving many men, the boulders bound onto rafts floated down to the ocean and then towed by boats along the coast. Hakuin's poem describes it as an epic journey:

"When the heavily laden rafts came in view we gaped in wonder.
There was a lofty rock with sage-like dignity, but not overawing.
The flat one crouched like a tiger or panther, yet full and plump.
They were covered with emerald moss like two ancient dragons,
Their distinctive markings proclaiming a kinship closely shared."
(*Poison Blossoms from a Thicket of Thorn*, trans Waddell, 489)

The book I chose for spring 2019's intensive study period is [Beating the Cloth Drum](#), a collection of Hakuin's letters translated and edited by Norman Waddell (Shambala Publications, 2012). I'd known Hakuin was one of our most



important Zen ancestors, responsible for reviving and reforming Rinzaï Zen in Japan in the first half of the 18th century. I'd known him as the author of "The Song of Zazen," which we chant daily during sesshins, and the "Rohatsu Exhortations," which Genjo Roshi reads aloud to us during Rohatsu Sesshin. I'd worked on his koan, "The Sound of One Hand Clapping." I love his calligraphy and drawings, and I knew he'd been a prolific writer. So when a friend gave me this selection of his letters, I thought they might help me understand him as a person.

Do they? Yes and no. The letters range from advice about family relationships to advice about Zen practice to requests for

assistance with publishing projects. They're not particularly self-reflective: they are part of the working life of a Zen priest, teaching, counseling, making arrangements. "My strong infatuation for streams and rocks is beyond any cure," the quotation with which I began this essay, feels like a more direct expression of Hakuin's private feelings than most of what can be found in the letters. Yet the images of streams and rocks immediately conjure up for me the moment-to-moment Hakuin I meet in the letters:

such a rock, a mighty boulder in his dedication to his work. And a stream which repeatedly turns into a torrent – a torrent of scorn for the lassitude from which he is trying to rouse Japanese Zen practice, for all the wrong views he opposes; a torrent of energy pouring into urging his students on, writing, repeatedly making vivid the koan-challenges issued by the old masters, still in his seventies traveling long distances in eighteenth-

century conditions to meet the burgeoning demand for his lectures, quick with verbal fireworks whenever needed. Perhaps he aspires to be "the lofty rock with sage-like dignity," but even though in the letters he doesn't come across as "overawing," the crouching tiger is always ready to spring, and the ancient dragons live.

A force of nature. Yet also, ordinary, a man writing letters which encouraged their recipients. Letters that survive let us share the real time of one person's communication with another. Most of the Hakuin letters that survive, like most of his other writings, come from Hakuin in maturity – from his later fifties well into his seventies, a period when, as Waddell points out, Hakuin's renown meant his letters were more likely to be preserved. More than half of the recipients in Waddell's selection are lay students, whom he advises about health and family matters but also takes very seriously as Zen practitioners. At his village home temple, Shoin-Ji, he taught both lay students and monks, and lay people as well as ordained constituted the crowds at the temples he visited. At 73, he reports to one of his senior monks, "It is wonderful, the

eagerness with which the priests and nuns and laypeople in this area devote themselves to sanzen. They take up all my time, day and night. I'm on the verge of collapse. I hope you will sympathize with me." (139) In his later years Hakuin started handing out "Dragon Staff certificates," ink paintings of a priest's staff in the process of transforming into a dragon, to those who passed "The Sound of One Hand Clapping" – a koan he constructed, with lay students especially in mind, as a "first barrier" more

accessible than "Mu." At age 76, he writes to a leader of one of his lay practice groups, "I was extremely glad to learn from your letters that you are all in good health and that everyone is gathering and practicing diligently mornings and nights. Nothing could give me greater pleasure. This is something that has not been seen in most other lay groups." (188)



Layman Ishii, the donor of the big rocks, was the recipient of an early long

letter about Zen teachers and Zen students. Ishii began practicing with Hakuin in 1728, only a year after a "decisive enlightenment" convinced Hakuin that he was finally, at age 41, ready to give himself fully to teaching and building up his temple. Hakuin had settled at Shoin-Ji as priest when he was 32, but spent his first decade or so there focussing intensely on his own practice (though from the beginning he had a few students, plus the work required just to stay alive in an extremely decrepit temple). Hakuin's 1734 letter to Layman Ishii is of special interest because, writing to this advanced student, Hakuin develops themes which recur in his later writing. Hakuin himself regarded it as a sufficiently important teaching document that he grouped it with other letters in *Poison Blossoms from a Thicket of Thorn*, the monumental assemblage of his teaching records which he published in 1759.

On Zen teachers, Hakuin addresses the damage they can do when they are too easy on their students. Far too many "present-day Zen teachers," lacking the rigor of the ancient masters, turn their students of "exceptional talent... into something half-

baked and unachieved. This is the primary reason for the decline of our Zen school, why the Zen groves are withering away." Teachers who out of "grandmotherly kindness" serve up "intellectual explanations" just knock students "back into the old familiar nest of conceptual understanding." The "roots binding the students to life are still not severed," and the students, given worthless seals of approval, "waste their entire lives stuck in a half-drunken, half-sober state of delusion. Not even the hand of a Buddha can cure them." Hakuin paraphrases Ummon, "While you are engaged in practice, if anyone comes up and tries to teach you Zen, I want you to take a dipper of warm shit and empty it over his head." (20-23)

On Zen students, Hakuin describes four categories that suggest the principles and attentiveness to individual students that must have guided his teaching. Students in all four categories have experienced an initial kensho. Very rarely, there appear students with exceptional ability, determination, and penetration. After "painstakingly working their way through the final barrier koans... their minds, in one single vigorous effort, abruptly transform," and they need only "the personal confirmation of a genuine teacher."

Students in a second category, whom Hakuin calls "initial penetrators," move through koan practice until they "gain strength that is almost mature," but though their "penetration is complete in some areas," it is incomplete in others. They have clarity while they are "sitting quietly doing zazen" but they can't take their understanding into the world. "It withers away amid the constant disparity between the meditative and active aspects of their life, their inner wisdom and their ordinary activity." Students in a third category work tenaciously, and "one day, owing to the guidance of a teacher, they finally are able to reach a state of firm belief. We can call them the believers." But "the great and essential matter of the Zen school is beyond them." With assiduous practice, however, students in both the second and third categories can eventually "advance into the ranks of those who have fully penetrated." The *Ten Oxherding Pictures* and "the norms laid out in the Five Ranks" were devised for these students – and there's hope for most of us!

Beyond hope, though, are students Hakuin calls “the hoodwinked.” They “come to believe in a teaching they hear” and then “follow arbitrarily the movements of their own minds and perceptions, confounding them for manifestations of truth.” They pick up “various plausible notions that they begin spouting to everyone they meet.” They believe themselves “genuine priests,” and when they hear of someone engaging in profound effort, they just laugh. (32-34)

Torei Enji was the student for whom Hakuin had the highest hopes, the student he believed had the gifts needed to continue and strengthen Hakuin’s efforts to revitalize Rinzai Zen. Most Chobo-Ji students know Torei about as well (and as incompletely) as we know Hakuin, through the lovely words of “Torei Enji’s Bodhisattva’s Vow Preface,” which we chant in English at the end of every early morning service during sesshins, right before the Four Great Vows. The greatest treasure of *Beating the Cloth Drum* is a sequence of six letters between Torei and Hakuin. There are three from Torei. He wrote the first in 1743, when he was first Hakuin’s student, age 22 (Hakuin was in his late 50’s). He wrote the third in 1757, when he was in his mid-thirties, abruptly informing Hakuin he was leaving Muryo-Ji, a small temple near Hakuin’s where Hakuin had installed him as abbot five years earlier, and going to Kyoto. Then there are three letters from Hakuin to Torei, beginning with Hakuin’s response to Torei’s abrupt flight from Muryo-Ji and continuing with two more over the next couple of years telling Torei he has purchased Ryutaku-Ji and both begging and insisting that Torei return to become its abbot. The two men wrote to each other more often than this, but these are the six letters that survive in their complete form.

The end of the story, of course, is that eventually Torei did return, Hakuin installed him as abbot of Ryutaku-Ji, and Torei ended up spending the rest of his life there (with some breaks, as I’ll describe later), continuing the promulgation of Hakuin’s Rinzai Zen. Genjo Roshi studied there, and our dharma brother Ozan (now Ko), is there training as a monk at this moment. But what the letters reveal is a complexly evolving and often fraught relationship. Torei began by idealizing Hakuin: he had found the teacher he had long been seeking. Hakuin began by amazement at his student’s

intellectual and spiritual giftedness and determination. Within a few years he had identified Torei as the Dharma heir who would succeed him at Shoin-Ji and continue his teaching. But Torei turned out to be deeply reluctant about devoting himself to assisting Hakuin and becoming a temple priest. He absolutely refused to take over at Shoin-Ji and only with much hesitation accepted the post at Muryo-Ji. Torei became convinced that his first priority had to be the development of a genuine maturity, a free and consistent integration of his Zen understanding and ordinary life. This had been, he points out to Hakuin in his third letter, Hakuin’s own path, and it was one which Hakuin recommended strongly in his teaching. Though Hakuin had managed to combine devotion to post-satori training and serving as a temple priest, Torei came to feel he could take this path himself only if he were free from temple responsibilities (and, it’s pretty clear, from Hakuin’s demands). Hakuin, Norman Waddell comments, “now finds himself in his early seventies up against someone as strong-willed as himself.” (169)

Waddell, as editor and translator, provides an invaluable narrative context for all of this, preceding and following each letter with extensive information gleaned from the *Chronological Biographies* of both men, which allows one further to understand their contrasting perspectives and needs. It’s all fascinating reading. With Torei, we begin with his eloquent account of his experiences, starting in childhood, of both utter determination and confusion in his religious quest. How joyful he was to see Hakuin for the first time: “I was sure I had come before the First Patriarch himself.” He is sad that as one of more than a hundred students he has “found it difficult to see you and seek your advice in person.” This letter is both his attempt to introduce himself more fully to Hakuin and a plea to Hakuin to be harder on him, to bring out “the iron hammer and tongs.” Hakuin responded, according to Torei’s *Biography*, “Is your aspiration as strong as that?” and then explained he had learned that his students “couldn’t take tongs and hammer,” were unable to receive “such strong methods.” He thinks Torei has the capacity but “I am a bit afraid that you may not be up to it physically.” But Torei “bristled” and replied, “Don’t say I’m weak . . . my resolve in seeking the Way is such that I would willingly lay down my life in the effort.” Within a year, Torei took Hakuin his

first great satori at Shoin-Ji, and Hakuin responded, “None of my students has ever seen what you have.” (151)

Torei sent his second letter a couple of years later (1746) from Kyoto, where he’d gone to be near his mother, who had been seriously ill. He had been away from Shoin-Ji for most of the year, and this letter is a detailed account of his practice and what he experienced as a decisive realization. Again and again, he says, he has experienced moments of clarity and then a loss of that clarity. “Freedom” is a key term. When he had an opening, he felt “utterly free and unrestricted.” When the clarity faded, “I felt constraints when engaged in the doings of daily life.” Then at last, at the end of a 150-day retreat, a bigger breakthrough finally happened, and “suddenly the enlightened activity of the master’s everyday life was mine.” (153) This is what he has been wanting, a freedom in everyday life; this is what he has observed in Hakuin. At the end of the letter, Torei tells his teacher he needn’t worry, that he vows to devote his life to “returning the patriarchal gardens to verdant springtime,” that he has “had the immense good fortune to receive your inka, and that “I have only one desire now, great teacher, and that is to put your mind at rest. My purpose lies nowhere else.” (155)

Hakuin, understandably, read this to mean that Torei was “confirming his acceptance of the offer that Hakuin had made to designate him as his Dharma heir.” But although Torei’s words had also implied he must be about to return to Shoin-Ji, he stayed away for almost four more years. He was not only continuing solitary practice but fighting off consumption (tuberculosis); indeed he feared for some time he hadn’t long to live. When Torei finally returned to Shoin-Ji at the end of 1749, Hakuin bestowed the Dharma robe on him. Torei spent more time in Kyoto and Edo, and he accompanied Hakuin on lecture trips. But all did not go smoothly; teacher and student struggled over Hakuin’s wish that Torei commit to taking over at Shoin-Ji.

Torei had been only 25 when he wrote that letter describing his breakthrough to feeling freedom in everyday life and his readiness to join his purpose with Hakuin’s. It clearly had become obvious to him that he wasn’t there yet, and he continued to think that for the real completion of his training, he needed to concentrate on it without

distractions. In 1752 Hakuin did persuade Torei to accept the abbotship of Muryo-Ji, a run-down nearby temple; Torei agreed only on condition that Hakuin cease expecting him to take over Shoin-Ji, that Torei would make all decisions regarding Muryo-Ji without regard to others' (Hakuin's) opinions, and that Torei "would be free to leave whenever he wanted, and entrust the temple to the care of another priest."

But Torei found the work of temple priest exhausting. Hakuin tried several more times to force the issue of succession at Shoin-Ji, and Torei finally cracked. At age 36, in 1757, he wrote telling Hakuin, "It has always been my earnest vow to press steadily forward until I complete the path of the Zen patriarchs. Having meager capacity and inferior bearings, I am physically and mentally exhausted. Not only am I incapable of carrying out the Bodhisattva practice of 'saving oneself and saving others,' I fear that I have disgraced my Zen comrades as well." (160) He closes with a plea that Hakuin "recall your own doings in the past," and "allow me to devote myself single-mindedly to attaining the Dharma." (161)

Hakuin's response was both to beg and to demand that Torei return to assist him. His first letter, putting the pressure on Torei, says, "...you should regard your return here as your destiny," and "These are the words of an old man whose strength is steadily waning." (This even though he had begun the letter by reporting, "I was full of vigor and vitality during my travels through the mountains this spring.") Hakuin adds, "As you are well aware, I haven't a single person here who I can count on to assist me. No one even to attend me." (166) Hakuin also tells Torei not to worry about Muryo-Ji; he has given up on it. But Torei must not start mulling things over, and must come back immediately. "If you don't, whatever dignity and reputation I have attained in my lifetime will be lost. It would put me in a terrible spot, and you would be committing a serious breach of your filial obligation ... Just consider it as something you must do for your teacher's sake. Set out at once." "Filial obligation" was hitting hard. Filiality was a value Hakuin held very strongly; the first letter in *Beating the Cloth Drum* gives a childhood friend a fierce scolding for behaving badly to his parents. The tensions of a father-son

relationship run deep in the struggles between Hakuin and Torei.

All this was happening at a time when Hakuin, now in his seventies, was traveling



Tōrei Enji (1721–1792)

and lecturing extensively, to groups of hundreds, and was also both writing and negotiating for the publication of a number of manuscripts, including *Poison Blossoms from a Thicket of Thorn*. His great effort was to open his teaching to a wider public and assure its continuity. Assuring the establishment of his leading Dharma heir had to be part of the plan. Torei met Hakuin in 1758, apologized, and assisted him with lectures on the *Blue Cliff Record*, but he still stayed away from Shoin-Ji. Hakuin, energy not exhausted after all, bought Ryutaku-Ji as his "retirement temple" and said he wanted Torei to live there as his Dharma successor. His second letter to Torei talks the place up, saying it has been described to him as "set in a beautiful situation, possessing an atmosphere of exceptional

sanctity." But "takuchi," Waddell says, means "marshy land"; it wasn't well suited for a temple.

In 1760, Hakuin again demanded that Torei return. A ceremony on the Ryutaku-Ji site designated Hakuin, now 75, as the founder. Torei arrived and was immediately appointed the new temple's first abbot. Installed as abbot two years later, Torei reconstructed the temple on a better site and began living and teaching there. His vacillation about his own path hadn't ceased, though. In 1776, eight years after Hakuin's death, a catastrophic fire razed the temple. Torei put students in charge of what remained and set off for Edo for "an extended period of post-satori practice." And what he studied this time was a Shinto tradition! Returning to Ryutaku-Ji but angry at students who were mis-managing things, for a few more years Torei "took up residence in a small hut he fashioned in the mountains several miles behind" the temple. More solitary practice. Finally the students apologized, and Torei returned yet again and took up the work of reconstruction. This time he stayed. He didn't die until 1792, so Hakuin had his Dharma heir in place at last.

It was one thing for Hakuin back in his 40's to lay out for Layman Ishii his confident thinking, inherited from his own masters, about Zen teachers and Zen students. It could be quite another, as these letters between Hakuin and Torei show, to live out the dramatic complexities of these relationships. It could be then, as it can be today, all intensely hard. And along the way also beautiful, and deeply purposeful. Waddell takes his title, *Beating the Cloth Drum*, from Hakuin's youthful letter to his unfilial friend. In the book's epigraph, Waddell says the phrase was "used to refer to someone who foolishly attempts something beyond his power" – beating on a cloth drum produces almost no sound. Hakuin's comment on the phrase is a koan: "Does it mean no sound is made? Does it mean doing something foolish? Or performing a worthless act? No, that's not it. Find out what it means by going right to it and engaging it yourself."

The Book of Equanimity

Case 58

The Diamond Sutra's Reviling

Genjo's 6th Day Summer Teisho

Preface to the Assembly

Depending on a sutra to understand a principle is making false accusations against the Buddhas of the Three Times. Departing from even one character of a sutra is the same as a devil's talk. Does a person who isn't regulated by cause and who doesn't enter into effect still receive karmic consequences?

Main Case

Attention! The Diamond Sutra says if someone is reviled by others it is because that person had acquired negative karma in a previous existence. Because of this past falling into evil ways he is reviled by people in this life, and in being reviled, the karma of the past will be exhausted.

Appreciatory Verse

*Success and failure bound together;
cause and effect glued together.
Outside the mirror Enyadata crazily runs;
Hasoda swings the staff
and the kiln is smashed.
The spirit comes forth to congratulate him.
Why say you've been beholden till now?*

.....

This case concerns the Diamond Sutra's viewpoint on "acquired negative karma." In our temple's translation of the Diamond Sutra we can find this viewpoint expressed on page 75 of our [Sutra Book](#). "Furthermore, if virtuous men and women who receive this teaching are downtrodden, their unfortunate destiny is the inevitable result of Karma committed in their past mortal lives. By virtue of their present misfortunes, the effects of their past will be worked out, and then they will be in a position to realize Supreme Enlightenment."

Before we go further into our investigation of acquired negative karma, let's review the second sentence of our Purification verse

(found on page 2 of our [Sutra Book](#)): "My greed, anger, and folly arise from the beginningless past; yet, they spring from this body, this mouth, and this mind." As I see it, these two sources are addressing the same subject. The latter viewpoint I accept, and the former I don't. The Preface to the Assembly of the Diamond Sutra says that "Departing from even one character of a sutra is the same as a devil's talk." Therefore, let me begin my devil's talk. (laughter)

In my view, the concepts of reincarnation and past mortal lives are merely leftovers, residual teachings found in Hinduism, from which the Buddhist tradition arose some 2,600 years ago. One of the core teachings of the historical Buddha was "Anatta," or "no self." When I speak about the kinds of realization that are cultivated with zazen, I try not to refer to our "true self," but I talk about how our practice helps us to encounter our "deep nature." I use the words "deep nature" instead of "true self" because we're Buddhists, and in Buddhist philosophy and experience, fundamentally there is no self. That's what the whole of the Diamond Sutra is really trying to impart. Do enough zazen and everyone eventually realizes that everything seen and unseen is seamless with the whole universe and beyond. In reality there is no self and other, no subject or object, no life and death, these are just human mental constructions. Wherever the universe came from, we're seamless with that too. This is our deep nature, seamless communion with beyond the beyond. No subject or object can be isolated in time or space; in other words, investigate any so-called aspect carefully enough and you will find the whole universe and beyond.

There is no such thing as mind, and Mu is only a reference to that which cannot be known, separated or isolated. We talk about an aspect of the universe called "mind," but as the Diamond Sutra says, this is just a name we give to the concept of mind. In reality there is no such thing as a separate aspect called mind, or soul, or spirit, or Dharma or Buddha, or Sangha. There are no separate aspects. These are just names we give to certain qualities of a multidimensional universe. Always remember that there are no gates, barriers, or fences between these different qualities that we name.

In reality there is no fundamental self to be reincarnated. And in my view, it is not Buddhist to think otherwise. I've heard the Dalai Lama say – even though he is considered by most to be a reincarnated lama or bodhisattva – that believing in God, Buddha or reincarnation is of no importance. In fact, any belief in anything is of little importance. On the other hand, when our hearts are open and we have a caring attitude, especially in the midst of conflict, confusion or other sorts of trials and tribulations, that's a different story. An open heart and a caring attitude in the midst of real or imagined threats is beneficial, and a good test of one's maturity. But regardless of maturity, in my view, no one is reincarnated as a human being or anything else for that matter, because there's no separate identity to be reincarnated. Which is why when asked about reincarnation, I'll say, "That's not my sense of reality, my experience is more akin to recycling!"



Everything is recycled, and nothing is created or destroyed, except space itself of course, which continues to bloom throughout this ever-expanding universe.

We are collectively the seamless aspect of the universe becoming conscious of itself, and amazingly we have become aware that this universe is expanding faster than light and accelerating! We now know this universe is about 14 billion years old. The

current estimate of the size of the universe is 92 billion light years across. So even though what we call matter can never travel faster than light, the universe itself has always been expanding faster than light. Space-time is coming into existence right now, faster than light and it is speeding up! This is weird. But I digress. (laughter)

Since, from a Buddhist viewpoint, there is no separate self, then there can be no reincarnation. Therefore, it is ridiculous in my view, to talk about past karma of past mortal lives being worked out in this life. On the other hand, since we're all intimately and seamlessly connected, and the current biosphere is seamlessly connected to all previous biosphere generations, then we are all working through the karma of previous generations.

The whole world is still working out the karma of genocide in Cambodia, Auschwitz, Rwanda, Nanjing and a hundred other places. Long after Trump is no longer president, this country will be working out the atrocious karma of this presidency. We are all part of one fabric and endlessly getting tangled and processing each other's karma. I am the product of my great-grandparents on my Italian side not being able to survive in Italy and coming to America, and the same is true of my grandparents on my Irish side. Their inability to survive in their country of origin, leading to their desperate need to come to America has had a very real impact on my life. To this day I'm suffering and working through my family's immigration trauma. I'm karmically connected to generations of my family, as you are to yours, and together we must do a better job of processing our collective trauma and the real harm this trauma has brought to this continent and ourselves.

I'm certainly working through some of my mother's karma of being sexually abused as a foster child, and not being able to escape. She had no place else to go; suffering sexual abuse by her foster parents pretty much guaranteed that some of this karma would be transmitted to me. My life has long been suffering under the weight of this karma. She's dead now, and I'm still working it out. My father was emasculated in many ways, and he, through his physical and sexual abuse of others, stole masculinity in sick little corners where he

could, mostly by beating on his male children and molesting my sister and female cousins. Even though he is long dead, my sister and I are still processing his karma. My brother died a few years ago, so he is no longer suffering, but the generational madness remains. I neither earned it nor deserved it, but here it is, and I'm doing my best to work it through.

People who come from ancestors who were slaves are working through this awful history today. Likewise, people descended from indigenous populations are still suffering and working hard on the karmic legacy created by the European settler invasion of this continent. If you look you can feel it, and we must share in the suffering caused by our immigrant ancestors and perpetuated by many current government policies. The First Nations are working through their karma of being displaced, eliminated, and culturally decimated; and settlers and those living on ancestral lands must share responsibility to process this collective karma. Of course we are mounting additional negative karma on top of ourselves by the way we are treating a new wave of immigrants. We are all seamlessly connected; therefore, for ill or good, we're all collectively working our karma.

Our Purification verse says that our "greed, anger and folly arise from our beginningless past", which when we think about it collectively, intuitively feels just so. Together we are working out our collective karma; it can be no other way. But this truth has nothing to do with what we deserve or have earned in our personal past lives, because as the Diamond Sutra often tells us, we are not to cherish any "idea of an ego-entity, a personality, a being or a separated individuality." No, we're *all* connected to *all* past lives, and we're *all* connected to *all* future lives. This generation, for better or worse, is working with and hopefully through our past karma. In fact, we are working it out right here on the cushion. As we do zazen, we are slowly but surely burning through karma collected in our personal history, family-of-origin history, and societal history. All of us who do enough zazen realize that we are processing, combusting, releasing, churning and digesting many layers of karma. And as this occurs, from time to time, we have a new insight, revelation or breakthrough that

integrates this digested karma into strength, empathy and maturity.

Whether we realize it or not, this process is taking place sitting here on the cushion. Sometimes as we leap forward a bit, it feels really heavenly. Most of the time processing our karma is pretty hellish. Our karma is personal only to the extent that in this lifetime we have made our own innumerable errors. If we have done malicious, heinous deeds, we may not be able to face them here on the cushion; in which case, future generations will have to work it out for us. This of course is very unfortunate, but in truth we are all suffering the unprocessed karma of our collective ancestors.

I almost skipped doing a teisho on this koan. (laughter) But since it's about the Diamond Sutra, which we study each Summer Sesshin at Chobo-Ji, I would be remiss to skip over it. Later on today we will review the four absolutely marvelous lines that the Diamond Sutra builds up to. In our text, they're translated in two different ways [see pages 83 and 84 of our [Sutra Book](#)]. These four lines totally resonate with my experience of Blue Sky Mind – which is just one of many ways we try to refer to that which is inconceivable, intimate and infinite.

Gerry Wick, who put together this translation of [The Book of Equanimity](#), takes a different direction than the path I'm going down with this teisho. However, he relates the following story about something the historical Buddha is thought to have said, which I also think is relevant. Evidently the historical Buddha once related that the virtue of being patient is far more important than assiduously maintaining the precepts. And why? Because if you're truly patient, you will find that you are naturally maintaining the precepts and avoiding extremes. Patience is very difficult to cultivate; I still lose my patience after more than forty years of Zen training. Carolyn (Josen), my forgiving wife, certainly wishes I were a lot more patient. I'm sure everyone in this room on occasion wishes I were a lot more patient. In fact, I think you could look at every person and say, I wish they were a lot more patient. (pause) Shodo, I hate to point you out, but you seem to be the most patient person in this room. But, I digress.

Continued on next page...

Patience is a virtue that we're all working on. Gerry Wick writes: "In one of the Suttas there's a story about a traveling merchant whose name was Funda." I remember reading this story early in my study of Buddhism and thinking, "I don't think this is the religion for me." And you'll see why as the story proceeds, but obviously I stuck around...

Funda one day was traveling where the Buddha was giving a talk, and heard him speak, and he was so impressed, he immediately became a disciple and a devotee. He was a very devoted and a wonderful man, who eventually attained arhatship [enlightenment]. An arhat is an enlightened being who has accomplished one's own practice. Arhats eventually become bodhisattvas. The Buddha told him, "Now I wish you to leave the sangha, and be with the people [like a minister] to expound the dharma." He told Funda to go to the west of India. "Those people who live there are very rough and mean people. If they insult you, what are you going to do? If they revile you, what are you going to do?" And Funda said, "I will consider them very good people because at least they didn't hit or kick me." Then the Buddha said, "What if they hit and kick you, how are you going to react?" Funda said, "I will still think they are good people because they don't beat me with sticks and throw stones at me." The Buddha said, "What if they beat you with a stick and throw stones, what would you do?" Funda said, "I would still think they are good people, because they don't injure me with a dagger or a knife." Then the Buddha said, "What if they do that? How would you react?" And Funda said, "I would still think they are good people, because they don't kill me." Finally the Buddha said, "If they try to kill you, what will you do?" And Funda said, "I'll still appreciate them. Among the Buddha's disciples are many who are willing to die, willing to end their lives because life is so painful. If they are going to take my life, I will be glad to let them." The Buddha said, "If you have that much patience, your mission will be successful." And indeed it was.

Let me just tell you, I have no such patience. If you're looking for me to have this much patience, you're going to have to wait a long time, because I'm not confident that this level is possible for anyone I know. Nevertheless, cultivating patience in this

lifetime is perhaps the highest virtue we can aspire to. Learning how to be patient with our practice, our family of origin, our kids, our sangha, ourselves, and in our workplace and society, with its crumbling democracy, is eminently useful. Cultivating patience is the most important skillful means we can deepen with time and we must never slack in our determination to realize more of this virtue.

Let's look at our Purification verse once more. "In the past, I have caused much harm. My greed, anger, and folly arise from this body, this mouth and this mind. I alone am responsible for the suffering they have brought, and I hereby renounce and relinquish them all." In other words, I think we are all called to cultivate patience, to shut up, and not let our impatience manifest. This is easy to say and hard to do. I have plenty of impatience, but I work hard, and I want all of us to be working hard, to not let our impatience lead the way. When we fail, we must work to learn from our missteps. Of course, most of us are tremendously impatient. But even so, we don't want that impatience to lead us. It's a lot of work. Only by cultivating deeper patience can we work towards healing and digesting the generational madness that we're all carrying. Zazen is the art of cultivating patience for pain, fatigue, confusion, fear, doubt, and for cultivating openheartedness towards others and ourselves. If we let our impatience lead the way, we're just contributing to our generational madness. I alone am responsible for the suffering my impatience brings about, and I hereby renounce it and relinquish it again and again and again, without end.

In time, our failures evolve into successes. Without a hundred failures of impatience, I have no way to learn patience. I have had to learn a lot of patience for the slowness of my own recovery from my pre-verbal abuse history. Moreover, I have even had to learn patience for my acting out my impatience! And I hope we're all working on that, and not using this kind of patience as some sort of excuse for not steadily manifesting more patience towards others. Over time we should all notice that we are becoming more patient for each other, the wider world, and ourselves. This is a must, so let's go straight on with our practice and training.

Closing Incense Poem

Summer Sesshin 2019

*Vast blue sky. Thunder clouds,
hornet's nest and dahlias.*

*Who hears the cries and joys
of the world?*

Shu Jo Mu Hen Sei Gan Do



Autumn Sesshin

Sept. 20th - 27th

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a **deposit (\$75)** and **application** by **Sept. 15**, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Please drop it by or mail it.

The cost of sesshin is \$250 (less dues for this month). Sesshin starts Friday evening, 9/20, 5:30pm with informal supper, introductions and orientation. Sesshin (from Saturday to the following Thursday) runs from 5am - 10pm. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town (**an additional \$10-\$20 per night**); please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel. The final Friday begins at 5am and concludes around 10am. We offer limited partial scholarships for sesshin. For more information please email: registration@choboji.org.

Eight Fold Path and Business

by Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares

I was once a corporate executive, and then an entrepreneur. The dharma touches every aspect of our lives, and has great relevance to the world of business, if we let it. Below are some thoughts on possible connections.

1. **“Right View,”** which can be summarized as “clear thinking,” free of delusions, distractions, and red herrings. In the world of business, this can be translated as being focused on the task at hand, not letting your mind wander, operating with focus, and free of irrelevant mental intrusions. One thing at a time, until a desired outcome is achieved. Important to note that this “outcome” is not always the “solution” to a problem, but can also be a step to that. And understanding that we are part of a team. The larger context is also having the right view or perspective on your job, and that it is but a part of our lives.
2. **“Right Intention,”** which most importantly entails being as harmonious as possible with the task at hand, free of malice, anger or other troubling emotions. In business, we often speak of this as doing what we need to do without letting things “get personal,” or “under our skin.” The task at hand please. For the greater good of the organization. Just that. Easier said than done, and needs to be practiced!
3. **“Right Speech.”** No lying. No gossiping. No stirring up trouble with our words. In a professional organization, this means speaking with integrity, and resisting the many temptations to bad-mouth each other. No conniving, back stabbing, or speaking falsely.
4. **“Right Action,”** which has three components: no killing (thankfully not usually an issue in the business world!);

no stealing; and no sexual misconduct. The last two are unfortunately very relevant in a business setting. Stealing in any form, either overt, which is quite obvious, but also covert, as in being idle in various ways on company time, eg. taking two hour lunches, or any number of other examples. Sexual misconduct, unfortunately, is all too rampant in professional settings: we don’t make unwanted advances or overtures to each other, we don’t speak disparagingly of someone in sexual (and actually, any other) terms etc. And if we do, we should know that the correction (up to and including being fired) will be swift and certain. Actions have consequences.



5. **“Right Livelihood.”** This one can be challenging. Historically, it means not engaging in any trade or profession where we are hurting others in any way. This entails rooting ourselves in our ethical compass, and doing “no harm” in our chosen jobs. Of course, it’s hard to completely avoid doing some kind of harm in our lives, in the broadest sense of that term. And different people will have different definitions. With all that said, we should, at least, resolve to do the best we can to minimize any harm we may engender through our

professions, and to ensure that the good outweighs the bad.

6. **“Right Effort.”** This means putting all our efforts in the proper direction, so as to generate good outcomes. And it also means refraining from striving in the wrong direction. In other words, we are disciplined in the things that are part of our jobs, and do what needs to be done, whether we “like” it or not. In line, and proportionally, with the other precepts. And conversely, we avoid putting effort into undermining our colleagues, setting traps for them etc., or placing our energies into efforts that don’t benefit the task at hand, the team we work with, or the organization we are a part of.

7. **“Right Mindfulness.”** We focus, are aware, and attentive. A very important tool and relevant in any endeavour, but specially so in the world of business. It also has received much attention in the last 20-30 years, and rightfully so. But it is just one tool in our arsenal! We balance this intense focus we can achieve through our meditative practices, with an ethical sensibility, and a more comprehensive and holistic outlook. And we do this so that “mindfulness” does not become just a super-sharp blade capable of cutting through anything, indiscriminately, and without consideration of the consequences.

8. **“Right Concentration.”** Meaning we collect ourselves, are centered, calm, one-pointed, and yet very aware, across a broad field. This precept is the culmination of the preceding seven and encompasses them all. To be clear, however, all of these are interconnected, and should be developed simultaneously. The benefits of achieving “right concentration” should be quite apparent in every facet of our professional lives, as individuals, as members of a team, and as integral parts of an organization.

All of these are rooted in our meditation practice, which sustains and informs us, in whatever field we may be engaged in.

Autumn Intensive

An intensive covers roughly the same time frame as the traditional temple kessei period, beginning with the first sesshin for that season and ending with the second. It's a time for concentrated study and practice. Chobo-Ji participants receive dokusan twice weekly between sesshins. *All unsui are strongly encouraged to participate fully.*

Chobo-Ji's Autumn Intensive will start Sept. 8, with mini-sesshin, and conclude on Dec. 9. The purpose of the intensive is to give students the maximum opportunity to release entanglements by giving one's self to the Dharma.

To participate one must commit to:

1) ZAZEN: Five hours of zazen per week, most, if not all, mini-sesshins, and full-time (or nearly full-time) attendance at two weeklong sesshins. This is the most important ingredient of the intensive.

2) Do a minimum of five hours of samu (working meditation - gardening or cleaning) per week. Most of these hours can be in your own home, garden or community, but at least one should be at the temple.

3) Read one book of your choosing from Chobo-Ji's [Zen Bibliography page](#) (or consult with Genjo about an alternative selection) and write a review of what you have read.

4) Keep a journal about your practice, at least one paragraph per week, and email a minimum of one paragraph per week each Friday to Genjo Osho on how the intensive is working on you.

5) Come to Dokusan at least once a week or if out of town try to schedule a Skype call with Genjo Osho. Skype calls can be short, 5-10 minutes maximum per week, or up to 20

minutes every two weeks, or 45 minutes once a month.

6) Be of service to this sangha or the wider community through some direct manifestation of our Great Vow.



Temple Posts beginning Sept. 7, 2019

Eddie Daichi Salazar
Rev. Sendo Howells
Shika (Host - Manager)

Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez
George Kyoki Gibbs
Tenzo (Cook)

Rev. Gendo Testa
Rev. Akesha Taishin Baron
Jikijitsu (Timekeepers)

Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares
Eric Seiku Dee
Densu (Chant Leaders)

Trevor Heishin Youngquist
Elijah Seigan Zupancic
Ben Barnet
Sam Tullman
Jisha (Tea Servers and zendo care)

Randal Daigetsu Tanabe
Inji (Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei
Fusu (Accountant)

Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez, Eddie Daichi Salazar, George Kyoki Gibbs
Intro Instruction

Zen Intro Series

Eight week exploration
starting Oct. 1st, 7:30 pm

Please come and join us for an 8-week exploration of Rinzai Zen practice. Tuesdays - 7:30 to 9:00 pm, beginning Oct. 1st and concluding Nov. 19th. This series repeats each Autumn and Spring.

A \$50 donation is suggested for the series, but any amount you care to give is accepted. No one will be turned away because of lack of funds.

Each class can be taken as a stand-alone. No prior experience with meditation practice is required and old-timers are also welcome to attend and share their thoughts and questions.

As a bonus with the full fee, you may attend either the Oct. or Nov. Zazenkai (half-day sit) at no additional cost.

Oct. 1st will concentrate on *zazen* (seated meditation) instruction.

Oct. 8th will explore *mindfulness practices*, such as chanting, walking, bowing and tea.

Oct. 15th will explore the *expanding circles of meditation* practice that bring us more fully into our daily lives.

Oct. 22nd will dive into the use of *koans* (Zen parables) as a way to explore our own deep nature and how to juggle and harmonize the relative, absolute and transcendent.

Oct. 29th will explore the *Four Noble Truths*.

Nov. 5th will explore the *Noble Eightfold Path*.

Nov. 12th will explore the *Four Great Vows*.

Nov. 19th will explore the *Ten Precepts*.

Jukai Ceremony

Jukai (受戒 – Precept Receiver) candidates need to petition in writing to the Abbot at least one month prior to the ceremony. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-Ji, or an affiliated temple, for a minimum of six months (including at least two weeklong sesshins), taken our precept classes or completed a course of equivalent study, must be regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha), working to live our Great Vow to care for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. At the ceremony candidates take the [Precepts and Four Bodhisattva Vows](#), and receive a rakusu and a dharma name.



On the seventh day of Summer Sesshin, Friday, June 28, 2019, Elijah Zupancic did Jukai (Precept and Dharma Name Ceremony).

Elijah began training with Chobo-Ji in 2002. Here are some of Elijah's own words on why he wanted to do this ceremony:

I had a breakthrough at my first Rohatsu Sesshin, but at that and future sesshins, when I heard the vows taken at Jukai, I said to myself "I'm not ready for that and I can't do that". I think that was an unconscious factor in me drifting away from the sangha. At some level I was scared of Jukai.

In the years since then, I've found working on spiritual values (precepts) to be one of the most transformative practices that I've undertaken. Although the experience of internalization of values doesn't have the same bang that my first breakthrough did, it has done more to change me. One year, I had undertaken the practice to systematically go through a list of values and write them on a card that I would carry around with me. I would make every effort to practice that value during the day in my interactions with

others. In later years, I held on to practicing values in life with a death grip because it was the only thing that would give me stability in a vast ocean of samsara. Like a process of erosion, it slowly started to loosen something in me, but it took years. Finally, I feel like I've arrived at a place where I can do Jukai with an honest level of sincerity where I can accept the precepts with a completely open heart.

I took the precept class with Sally on April and I had read the book [Taking our Places](#) as part of it. The precept that my heart is most naturally aligned with is the precept to honor and to not abuse the three treasures - Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha. This is the central core of my practice and a key part of my ego identity. I struggle the most with the precept of not lying and being honest – I'm riddled with lies that I've told myself that I've turned into realities. Every time I see one of these, I am saddened for what harm it brought the world and I suffer because I see how I lost a chance at a genuine connection with others due to my own lies.

The last question regarding suggestions for my dharma name; it is possibly the hardest for me because it confronts me

with my own egoism regarding how I want to be perceived. A part of me wants you to choose it entirely and for me not to give input in order for me to not have to look at that closely. After some reflection, I think a dharma name that incorporates the Bodhisattva vow resonates with me.

Genjo Osho gave Elijah the Dharma name: Seigan - "Sei" = Oath (誓) – "Gan" = Wish (願), together these kanji are translated in English as "Great Vow."



Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat. 7-8:30 AM; M & W, 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun. 6:30-7:30 PM

Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 9/1, 9/15, 9/29, 10/6, 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/17, 11/24, 12/22

Every Tuesday we review how to do zazen, 7:30-9:00pm (except 9/24 & 12/3)

Zazenkai - 1/2 day sit with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Board Meeting ...

Autumn Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...

Eight Week Zen Intro Series Begins ...

Dharma Heir Ceremony for Rinzan Osho in Portland ...

Zazenkai - 1/2 day sit with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Precept Class (part 1) ...

Introduction to NVC as a Spiritual Practice, Part 1...

Follower of the Way Dharma Talk by Calvin Gimpelevich ...

Introduction to NVC as a Spiritual Practice, Part 2...

Precept Class (part 2) ...

Zazenkai - 1/2 day sit with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Board Meeting ...

Rohatsu Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...

Sept. 8, 5 - 11:15am

Sept. 8, 11:30am - 1:30pm

Sept. 20 (5:30pm) - 27 (10am)

Oct. 1, 7:30 - 9:00pm

Oct. 5, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Oct. 13, 5 - 11:15am

Oct. 24, 7-8:30pm

Oct. 26, 10am - 4:40pm

Oct. 27, 7:30 - 8:30pm

Nov. 2, 10am - 4:40pm

Nov. 7, 7-8:30pm

Nov. 10, 5 - 11:15am

Nov. 10, 11:30am - 1:30pm

Nov. 30 - Dec. 8th

To subscribe to Plum Mountain News or our weekly Temple Happenings email bulletin write: subscribe@choboji.org

To learn more about membership see: <http://choboji.org/membership-and-no-ranks/>



Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji

Plum Mountain News
1733 S. Horton St., unit 7
Seattle, WA 98144